



## ***Day One: Buried Alive***

I woke again one morning with this phrase in my heart: “If you try to bury something that is very much alive in you, it will keep trying to get out of the grave.”

For a start, I was confused. ‘*Father, what does this mean?*’ I wondered. Sometimes God says stuff to us that messes with our tidy little theologies.

I was off again for a little while with my bat, trying to kill my past again, searching for life where there is only death so I could kill it once and for all!

Then I realised what was alive in me, and it was not my dead past or sins! It was the truth of Jesus Word, His love, His faithfulness, and His very identity in me. It was calling to me continually, “*This is not who you are.*” The beautiful Holy Spirit was convicting me of truth, shining the light for me to see, asking me to yield upwards... to the life inside of me. All of the identity and life of Jesus inside me was saying, “*Get out of that grave! You are not dead anymore!!!*” Another gossamer thin cord, broken.

You know that song which says, “*It's no longer I that liveth, but Christ that liveth in me*”? That's actually scripture. It took my lightning fast brain a while to put that together! All along, I'm thinking that somehow my past has come alive again in me and I have to put it to death – to crucify it so that I can be alive to God. Yet God says, ‘*You are dead to sin*’, simple as that. *Consider yourself dead to sin* (Rom 6:11). That means every shortcoming, and every failure to meet the mark. ‘Consider’ or another rendering of that word would be ‘reckon’. It is a precise accounting term. It means when all is added up, this is the answer.

You cannot reckon yourself to something that is not true. It means to align with a concrete truth. The ledger says your account is paid, and you owe nothing. So if God be true and every man a liar (Rom 3:4) and He says ‘*I have redeemed you, consider yourself dead to sin, remember it no more, I don't...*’ Who are you going to believe?

What God believes will not change. He has called it. If you agree, you live it. If you disagree, you live a lie, trapped in the pain of a past that has been forgotten by all but you.



The Holy Spirit will never stop telling you who you really are... and there is the rub. Our born again spirit convicts us of Jesus' truth and our flesh is trying to tell us a lie. That is where the pain and suffering is. If we truly believed we were dead to our past sin (as near as yesterday or this morning), it no longer has power over us. It cannot hurt you - dead things don't hurt you! They don't get offended or have emotional breakdowns. They are dead!

**Just kick it in the guts and walk right on by.**

Oh wow, can I say that?!?! Well I just have. That's about all we need to do when our past lies to us. Let's not even stop for it...



The Holy Spirit is continually whispering to you who you really are. What can you hear Him saying to you about you?

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## ***Day Two: Bold Grace in Time of Need***

In Philippians 3, Paul is very forthright in what He thinks of His past. He equates it all to poop! That's right - some translations are spooked by such strong language, but the original word is actually 'dung', or poop. Let me ask you a question: Do you spend much time thinking about your poop after you are done with it? Well that's how much time I suggest you put into thinking about your past.

Well maybe Paul had it easy, really...what did Paul have to put behind him?!?! Only murder... persecuting Jesus... wrongfully imprisoning people... missing God so badly that he killed for it. Yet we read in 1 Corinthians that Paul called himself blameless! The only way he could do that was to truly live dead to his past failures – (to 'consider it so') and alive to God who held His future. Trusting God to complete in Him that which He began... judging the Father faithful and thereby receiving the promise.

This is exactly what He offers us.

Some might say, *"This is too easy... you can live how you want and get away with it. It's 'easy believism'!"* I suggest to you that it is just the opposite.

It will take every ounce of belief that you have in order to walk it out... in fact, you will have to lay down every single contrary belief you have, in order to do it. There is nothing 'easy' about living like this – we are all too familiar with the shortcomings of our flesh and find they're in our face all of the time and it's oh so easy to believe them. The life of faith is to believe the truth – even when the evidence appears to be contrary. That's what Romans 12:1 really means... a *living sacrifice*.

***Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV)*** *Let us therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.*

We love to quote this verse, however it really says that we come boldly before the throne of grace, *WHEN* - not when we feel squeaky clean. No it says we come boldly **in our time of need**. I submit to you that our greatest time of need is when we have fallen mightily... when our face is in the dirt and we have failed dismally (we've *missed the mark* big time). That makes it harder doesn't it! Who wants to be caught in the throne room looking like that?!?! Yet that is



the very time God says to come boldly, and to get the grace and mercy you need and keep on going. That doesn't sound like 'easy grace' or 'easy believism' to me! That's what taking up your cross daily is. It is believing Him daily... minute by minute if you need to. Believing who He says you are, what He says you have and what He says you can do.

That is truly living by the spirit.



In time of need, have you felt like you could boldly go to the throne? Why or why not?

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What does it look like for you to truly live by the spirit?

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### ***Day Three: Unless it Falls to the Ground***

Your old man will produce no fruit in your life. Your old hurts, difficulties, abuses or abusing, your mistakes and failures... they will only produce fruit in your life IF you recognise them for what they are – a dead, sinful past - and deal with them appropriately.

***John 12:24 (NKJV)*** *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, It remains alone: but if it dies, it produces much grain.*

Those seeds of hurt, pain, shame and contempt... let them fall to the ground and be buried where they rightfully belong - nailed to the cross of Christ! Trust the Father, as Jesus did, to bring new life. *“Father in to your hands I commit my spirit,”* Jesus said to the Father at His death.

I reckon that if Jesus carried the sin of the world, He had to let a few dead things fall to the ground and be buried, trusting the Father to bring the newness of life. The Father will bring forward a harvest of joy and multiply a hundred fold those previous seeds of pain. That is the only way to make failure work for us - to conquer our past and receive the harvest of our souls.

Recognise it as dead, let it fall to the ground (which is essentially forgiveness, of yourself and others) and trust the miracle of the seed.

***Romans 8:11 (NLT)*** *The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.*

The exact same Spirit of God that raised Christ from the dead lives in you!!! This Spirit which brought life to Jesus, will bring you new life. Just as Jesus had to trust Himself to the Spirit of God to resurrect Him as He was nailed to that cross, so too when we trust His life in us, He will not fail to burst forth with life from within us and release us from the tomb into the newness of our resurrection lives!

This, THIS is faith...



## Soak Time

Meditate on the fact that the very same Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in you. Close your eyes, and ask Him to show it to you.

Do you trust the Spirit of God within you to raise you into newness of life?

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## ***Day Four: Beauty for Ashes***

***Isaiah 61:3 (NKJV)*** *To give them beauty for ashes, the oil for joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness: that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.*

This is the title God gave me for this message, so it is fitting that it be the conclusion. Jesus said He saved the best wine until last.

This verse is all about exchange, and let me tell you that the exchange rate is absolutely loaded in our favour! When you're sitting in ashes and mourning and heaviness seem to be your companions... what an exchange this is!!! Jesus - the One anointed to heal the broken hearted, proclaim liberty for the captives and open the prison to those who are bound, is indeed our great exchange!

Jesus says to you, "*Girl, I've already made the great exchange.*" He doesn't make up the difference between us and God - this is not a pro rata agreement!

**He becomes us, so that we can become Him.**

***2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)*** *He became sin who knew no sin so that I could become the righteousness of God.*

- He takes my ashes, my mourning and my heaviness. The Amplified Bible describes heaviness as a burdened and failing spirit. That description has fitted me a time or two.  
And then He gives me a garland or diadem of beauty (oh sounds like a crown!). He surrounds me with His love and beauty... He gives me the crown of life.
- The oil of joy - the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit - pure joy in the midst of circumstances. You know the saying, laughing in the face of circumstances. The oil of joy, baby, makes the devil really mad! It's for my mourning.
- A garment of praise – this is a robe of righteousness to replace my own garment of spiritual heaviness and burdens.

So I invite you girls to join me, like Sarah, and judge Him faithful to keep that which He has eternally promised to us. Sarah did, and she birthed a nation of Kings and priests. Rahab did and she saved her entire family. Esther did and



she saved a nation. Jael did and she defeated an evil enemy. Hannah did and her shame gave way to victory. Mary did and she birthed Jesus. Most of all Jesus did and He defeated death, hell and the grave.



Do you judge Him faithful to keep that which He has promised to you?

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## ***Day Five: Your Story – His Story***

We are in pretty good company. I don't know all of your stories, but He does. He came to write you a new story... or really your true story. To issue you an invitation to be in **History**... OUR story, the one He wrote for me and you before the foundation of the world. When HE already loved us and planned for our salvation.

I don't mean to trivialise your story or make your pain seem to be a small thing. Jesus didn't do that and neither do I. In fact the Bible says, He stores all of our tears in a bottle. The sheer pain and desperation of humanity - which includes me and you - was such a big deal to God that He was willing to pay the most expensive price ever for our story. He paid with His son. It cost Him everything.

**The cost of the sacrifice is the value God places on you and your story.**

I invite you now to believe Him, to declare your faith and trust in Him despite any circumstance. Let Him show you the glorious story He wrote for you before the foundation of the world. Consider yourself dead to sin and your past and live the life He paid for. It is the greatest honour you could ever pay him.

He says to you today, *"You are worth every drop of blood."*

### **Beauty for Ashes**

Beauty for ashes, treasure untold.  
Mourning and sadness no longer to behold.  
For He heals the broken hearted, binds up all their wounds.  
Anointed by the Father, love fully bloomed.

Graves are opened, captives freed, liberty proclaimed.  
God's breath upon His people, bringing the dead to life again.  
For the oil of joy flows freely, like the crimson of the cross.  
Transforming all it touches, as it seeks to save the lost.

Let praises ring, my heaviness gone, my Saviour is so sweet.  
He offered Himself in my stead, my righteousness complete.  
Now I'm planted deep, a planting of the Lord.  
Evergreen with beauty, the ashes of my past,



Forgiven and forgotten, in the joy I have at last.

So come all ye weary, bring your burden to the cross,  
And as you yield your offering of ashes, prepare to behold,  
The beauty that replaces those painful scars of old.  
Lift your face up to the Father, no shame there to see  
And receive the oil of gladness, this is your victory.

Don't look back, but confidently ahead, your destiny so bold.  
As hand in hand with your saviour you walk the streets of gold.  
His kingdom is within you, the past left behind.  
Your glorious future, no longer are you blind.

Will you make the exchange, the choice is yours, in Jesus be renewed.  
Today is the day, now is the time.  
His life for mine, O glorious Divine.

## Soak Time

Let Him show you the glorious story He wrote for you before the foundation of the world.

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